

Accounts of the American and French POW Camps after World War II

[John Wear](#)

The Western Allies deliberately murdered large numbers of disarmed German prisoners of war (POWs) after World War II by means of starvation, exposure and withholding water. This Allied atrocity was first publicly exposed in 1989 in the book *Other Losses* by James Bacque. Bacque estimated that the victims undoubtedly number over 790,000, almost certainly over 900,000, and quite likely over a million. The prisoners' deaths were knowingly caused by army officers who had sufficient resources to keep these prisoners alive. Relief organizations such as the Red Cross were refused permission to help the German POWs in the Allied-run camps.[\[1\]](#)

Inconvenient History has previously published an article documenting the testimony of American soldiers who witnessed the lethal conditions in these Allied POW camps.[\[2\]](#) This article documents the testimony of other witnesses to this Allied atrocity.

Surviving German POWs

Surviving German prisoners have provided testimony of the horrific conditions and mistreatment they received in the Allied POW camps. Many surviving German prisoners were badly mistreated even before arriving at the Allied camps. Werner Wilhelm Laska, a German POW, reported his transfer to an American prison camp:

The American guards who arrived with the truck were nasty and cruel from the start. I was forced in with kicks and punches to my back. Other German soldiers were already on board. After a drive of an hour or two we arrived at an open field on which many German servicemen were already assembled, in rank and file. As we got off the truck, a large group of Americans awaited us. They received us with shouts and yells, such as: "You Hitler, you Nazi, etc..." We got beaten, kicked and pushed; one of those gangsters brutally tore my watch from my wrist. Each of these bandits already possessed 10 or 20 watches, rings and other things. The beating continued until I reached the line where my comrades stood. Most of our water-bottles (canteens), rucksacks etc. were cut off, and even overcoats had to be left on the ground. More and more prisoners arrived, including even boys and old men. After a few hours, big trailer-trucks— usually used for transporting cattle—lined up for loading with human cattle.

We had to run the gauntlet to get into the trucks; we were beaten and kicked. Then they jammed us in so tightly that they couldn't even close the hatches. We couldn't even breathe. The soldiers drove the vehicles at high speed over the roads and through villages and towns; behind each trailer-truck always followed a jeep with a mounted machine gun.

In late afternoon we stopped in an open field again, and were unloaded in the same manner, with beating and kicking. We had to line up at attention just like recruits in basic training. Quickly, the Americans fenced us in with rolls of barbed wire, so there was no space to sit or lie down that night. We even had to do our necessities in the standing position. Since we received no water or foodstuffs, our thirst and hunger became acute and urgent. Some men still had tea in their canteens, but there was hardly enough for everyone.

Next day the procedure began as on the day before; running the gauntlet into the cattle-trailers, then transport to the next open field. No drinking and no eating, but always fenced in--there is an American song: "... Don't fence me in..." --as well as the childish behavior of most of the Americans: Punishing the Nazis! After the first night, when we were loaded again, some of us stayed on that field, either dead or so weak and sick that they could not move any more.

We had been approaching the Rhine River, as we noticed, but we had still one night to pass in the manner related. It was terrible!

All this could not have been a coincidence. It must have been a plan, because, as we later learned, there was nearly the same treatment in all camps run by American units. During the war we heard about the "Morgenthau-Plan" and the "Kaufman-Plan," and exactly that seemed to have been happening to us in those moments: the extermination of an entire people![\[3\]](#)

Laska eventually was sent to France to work in coal mines and other unpleasant places, where his ordeal continued. On January 7, 1950, the French finally discharged Laska to Germany.[\[4\]](#)

Several prisoners from the Heilbronn POW Camp wrote Bacque to confirm the lethal conditions in this camp. One is Anton Pfarrer, who was 16 years old when captured and imprisoned at Heilbronn. Pfarrer wrote: "I can recall nearly every day of suffering, but I made it back, although so many thousands never did. There were 3,000 men in my cage (A1) in May but by the end of August, only 1,500 were left to answer roll call. They had all died." There were no discharges from his cage during that time. Pfarrer telephoned U.S. Gen. Richard Steinbach in 1998 to thank Steinbach for saving his life. Steinbach had taken over administration of Heilbronn in October 1945 and immediately corrected the lethal conditions in the camp.[\[5\]](#)

German POW Rudi Buchal was ordered to serve as a medical orderly-clerk in the "hospital" at Bretzenheim, which was a tent with an earth floor inside the camp. The hospital had no beds, no medical supplies, no blankets and starvation rations for the first month or more. American details later obtained a few supplies from the German towns nearby by American teams. Buchal was told by drivers of the 560th Ambulance Company that 18,100 POWs had died in the six camps round Bretzenheim in the 10 weeks of American control. Buchal also heard the figure of 18,100 dead from other American hospital personnel and from Germans who were in charge of the hospital statistics. The six camps were Bretzenheim, Biebelsheim, Bad Kreuznach, Dietersheim, Hechtsheim, and Heidesheim.[\[6\]](#)

The reliability of Rudi Buchal was attested to by the U.S. Army itself. Upon his release Buchal received a paper stating that in the opinion of U.S. Army officers who had custody of him, "During the above-mentioned period [April-July 1945] he proved himself to be co-operative, capable, industrious and reliable." Similar to the experience of U.S. Cpl. Daniel McConnell, Buchal discovered that these "hospitals" were merely places to take moribund prisoners rather than places to help the prisoners get well. Buchal recalled that many of the mortally sick evacuees were taken to Idstein, north of Wiesbaden. Buchal stated, "And I can remember that from there no prisoners returned."[\[7\]](#)

German prisoners who survived Bretzenheim have described arriving there on May 9, 1945. The prisoners saw three rows of corpses along the road in front of the camp. A total of 135 dead from Bretzenheim were acknowledged by the Americans to have been buried in Stromberg on May 9 and May 10. Not all of the dead at Bretzenheim were killed by the usual starvation, disease and exposure.[\[8\]](#)

Johannes Heising, formerly the abbot of a monastery on the Rhine, published a book in the 1990s about his experiences in the U.S. camp at Remagen. Franz-Josef Plemper, another former prisoner at Remagen, reminded Heising of an event not described in Heising's book: on one night the Americans had bulldozed living men under the earth in their foxholes. Plemper described the scene to Heising:

One night in April 1945, I was startled out of my stupor in the rain and the mud by piercing screams and loud groans. I jumped up and saw in the distance (about 30 to 50 meters) the searchlight of a bulldozer. Then I saw this bulldozer moving forward through the crowd of prisoners who lay there. In the front it had a blade making a pathway. How many of the prisoners were buried alive in their earthholes I do not know. It was no longer possible to ascertain. I heard clearly cries of "You murderer."

The horror of this incident had been so painful that Heising had suppressed it from his memory. Heising remembered this event only after Plemper reminded him of it.[\[9\]](#)

A similar incident occurred at the American camp at Rheinberg in mid-June 1945. According to reports from several ex-prisoners, the last act of the Americans at Rheinberg before the British took over was to bulldoze one section of the camp level while there were still men living in their holes in the ground.[\[10\]](#) Prisoner Wolfgang Iff said that in his sub-section of perhaps 10,000 people at Rheinberg, 30 to 40 bodies were dragged out every day. As a member of the burial commando, Iff was well placed to see what was going on. Iff saw about 60 to 70 bodies going out per day in other cages of similar size.[\[11\]](#)

A 50-year-old sergeant with a Ph.D. kept a diary in ink on toilet paper at Rheinberg. He wrote on May 20, 1945: "How long will we have to be without shelter, without blankets or tents? Every German soldier once had shelter from the weather. Even a dog has a doghouse to crawl into when it rains. Our only wish is finally after six weeks to get a roof over our heads. Even a savage is better housed. Diogenes, Diogenes, you at least had your barrel."[\[12\]](#)

Part of the problem at Rheinberg was that for a long time it was overcrowded. A cage measuring 300 meters by 300 meters was supposed to hold no more than 10,000 people. However, at the beginning, as many as 30,000 prisoners were forced in, leaving only about three-square meters per person. Prisoner Thelen told his son through the barbed wire that 330 to 770 prisoners per day were dying at Rheinberg. The camp then contained between 100,000 and 120,000 prisoners.[\[13\]](#)

Charles von Luttichau said of his POW camp at Kripp near Remagen:

The latrines were just logs flung over ditches next to the barbed wire fences. To sleep, all we could do was to dig out a hole in the ground with our hands, then cling together in the hole. We were crowded very close together. Because of illness, the men had to defecate on the ground. Soon, many of us were too weak to take off our trousers first. So our clothing was infected, and so was the mud where we had to walk and sit and lie down. There was no water at all at first, except the rain, then after a couple of weeks we could get a little water from a standpipe. But most of us had nothing to carry it in, so we could get only a few mouthfuls after hours of lining up, sometimes even through the night. We had to walk along between the holes on the soft earth thrown up by the digging, so it was easy to fall into a hole, but hard to climb out. The rain was almost constant along that part of the Rhine that spring. More than half the days we had rain. More than half the days we had no food at all. On the rest, we got a little K ration. I could see from the package that they were giving us one tenth of the rations that they issued to their own men. So, in the end we got perhaps five percent of a normal U.S. Army ration. I complained to the

American camp commander that he was breaking the Geneva Convention, but he just said, "Forget the Convention. You haven't any rights."

Within a few days, some of the men who had gone healthy into the camp were dead. I saw our men dragging many dead bodies to the gate of the camp, where they were thrown loose on top of each other onto trucks, which took them away.[\[14\]](#)

One 17-year-old captive who could see his village in the distance was found shot one morning at the foot of the barbed wire fence. His body was strung up and left hanging on the wire by the guards as a warning to the other prisoners. Many prisoners cried out, "Moerder, moerder [murderer, murderer]!" In retaliation, the camp commander withheld the prisoners' meager rations for three days. For prisoners who were already starving and could hardly move because of weakness, it was frightful; for many it meant death. The commander also withheld rations at other times to punish the prisoners.[\[15\]](#)

George Weiss, a German tank mechanic, said his camp on the Rhine was so crowded that "we couldn't even lie down properly. All night we had to sit up jammed against each other. But the lack of water was the worst thing of all. For three and a half days we had no water at all. We would drink our own urine. It tasted terrible, but what could we do? Some men got down on the ground and licked the ground to get some moisture. I was so weak I was already on my knees, when finally we got a little water to drink. I think I would have died without that water. But the Rhine was just outside the wire. The guards sold us water through the wire, and cigarettes. One cigarette cost 900 marks. I saw thousands dying. They took the bodies away on trucks."[\[16\]](#)

German Cpl. Helmut Liebich was captured near Gotha in central Germany by the Americans on April 17, 1945. The Gotha prison camp had only the usual barbed wire fences with no tents. The prisoners were forced to run a gauntlet between lines of guards who hit them with sticks in order to get a small ration of food. On April 27, 1945, the prisoners were transferred to the American camp at Heidesheim further west, where there was no food at all for days, and then very little. The prisoners started to die in large numbers from exposure, starvation and thirst. Liebich saw about 10 to 30 bodies a day being dragged out of his section, Camp B, which held about 5,200 prisoners.

On May 13, 1945, Liebich was transferred to another American camp at Bingen-Büdesheim near Bad Kreuznach. Liebich soon fell sick with dysentery and typhus. He was transferred again, semi-conscious, in an open-topped railway car with about 60 other prisoners. On a detour through Holland, the Dutch stood on bridges to throw stones down on the heads of the prisoners. After three nights, Liebich's fellow prisoners helped him stagger into the American camp at Rheinberg, again without shelter or much food.

One day in June 1945, Liebich saw the British through the hallucinations of his fever. The British saved his life in their hospital at Lintfort. Liebich remembered the life-saving care he received from the British with gratitude for the rest of his life. Liebich said: "It was wonderful to be under a roof in a real bed. We were treated like human beings again. The Tommies treated us like comrades."[\[17\]](#)

Some historians claim that an order from Eisenhower banning civilians from supplying food to the camps was prompted by an overall threat of a food shortage. However, many German prisoners and civilians saw American guards burn the food brought by civilian women to the POWs. Ernest Kraemer, a prisoner at Rheinberg, said: "At first, the women from the nearby town brought food into the camp. The American soldiers took everything away from the women, threw it in a heap, and poured gasoline

[benzine] over it and burned it.” Writer Karl Vogel, the German camp commander appointed by the Americans in Camp 8 at Garmisch-Partenkirchen, opined that Eisenhower himself had ordered the food to be destroyed. The Americans were destroying food outside the gate even though the prisoners were getting only 800 calories per day.[\[18\]](#)

German prisoner Herbert Peters stated concerning conditions at the U.S. camp at Rheinberg: “Even when there was little for us to eat, the provisions enclosure was enormous. Piles of cartons like bungalows with intersecting streets throughout.”[\[19\]](#)

Former prisoners have also reported numerous instances of prisoners and civilians who were shot by American and French guards. Paul Kaps, a German soldier who was in the U.S. camp at Bad Kreuznach, wrote, “In one night, May 8, 1945, 48 prisoners were shot dead in Cage 9.” Prisoner Hanns Scharf witnessed an especially gruesome killing when a German woman with her two children asked an American guard at Bad Kreuznach to give a wine bottle to her husband, who was just inside the wire. The guard drank the wine himself, and when the bottle was empty the guard killed the prisoner with five shots. The other prisoners protested, and U.S. Army Lt. Holtsman said: “This is awful. I’ll make sure there is a stiff court-martial.” No evidence of a court-martial of this or any other similar incidents has ever been found.[\[20\]](#)

Prisoners and civilian women were shot even though an order from Gen. Eisenhower gave individual camp commanders a chance to exempt family members trying to feed relatives through the wire. German prisoner Paul Schmitt was shot in the American camp at Bretzenheim when he came close to the wire to receive a basket of food from his wife and young son. Dr. Helmut von Frizberg saw an American guard at Remagen shoot a German prisoner for talking to his wife through the wire. Frau Agnes Spira was shot by French guards at Dietersheim in July 1945 for taking food to prisoners. Spira’s memorial in nearby Büdesheim reads, “On the 31 of July 1945, my mother was suddenly and unexpectedly torn from me because of her good deed toward the imprisoned soldiers.”[\[21\]](#)

French Capt. Julien got into serious trouble for quarrelling with a fellow officer, Capt. Rousseau. Rousseau shot at German women in Julien’s presence, at about the same time and in the same place as a French officer shot Frau Spira. At Bad Kreuznach, William Sellner said that at night guards would fire a machine gun at random into the camps, apparently for sport. Ernst Richard Krische in Bad Kreuznach wrote in his diary on May 4, 1945: “Wild shooting in the night, absolute fireworks. It must be the supposed peace. Next morning 40 dead as ‘victims of the fireworks,’ in our cage alone, many wounded.”[\[22\]](#)

Other Witnesses

In an interview conducted in June 1945 with the U.S. Army, Dr. Konrad Adenauer deplored the U.S. death camps along the Rhine in very strong terms. Adenauer said:

Some of the German PWs are being held in camps in a manner contrary to all humanitarian principles and flagrantly contrary to the Hague [and Geneva] Convention. All along the Rhine from Remagen-Sinzig to Ludwigshafen the German prisoners have been penned up for weeks without any protection from the weather, without drinking water, without medical care and with only a few slices of bread to eat. They could not even lie down on the floor [ground]. These were many hundreds of thousands. It is said that the same is true in the interior of Germany. These people died by the thousands. They stood day and night in

wet mud up to their ankles! Conditions have improved during the past few weeks. Of course the enormous number of prisoners is one of the causes for these conditions but it is noteworthy that to the best of my knowledge, it took a great many weeks to improve at least the worst conditions. The impression made on the Germans by the publication of facts about the concentration camps was greatly weakened by this fact...I know that in the winter of 1941-1942 the Russian prisoners were very badly treated by the Germans and we ought to be ashamed of the fact, but I feel that you ought not to do the same thing. German prisoners too in camps ate grass and picked leaves from the trees because they were hungry exactly as the Russians unfortunately did. [23]

Dr. Adenauer's description of the German men who "stood day and night in wet mud up to their ankles" as they died by the thousands is similar to the description of the prisoners in American camps along the Rhine made in April 1945 by U.S. Cols. Charles Beasley and James Mason, who said that the prisoners were "standing ankle-deep in mud." [24]

Dr. Joseph Kirsch, a French volunteer doctor who worked in an evacuation hospital for moribund prisoners of war, wrote:

I volunteered to the Military Government of the 21st [French] Military region [near Metz]...I was assigned to the French Military hospital at the little seminary of Montigny...In May 1945, the Americans who occupied the hospital at Legouest brought us every night by ambulance, stretchers loaded with moribund prisoners in German uniforms...These ambulances arrived by the back door...We lined up the stretchers in central hall. For treatment, we had nothing at our disposal. We could only perform elementary superficial examinations (auscultation), only to find out the anticipated cause of death in the night...for in the morning, more ambulances arrived with coffins and quicklime...These prisoners were in such extremely bad condition that my role was reduced to comforting the dying. This drama has obsessed me since the war; I consider it a horror. [25]

Similar to the experience of U.S. Cpl. Daniel McConnell, Dr. Kirsch discovered that these "hospitals" were merely places to take moribund prisoners rather than places to help the prisoners get well.

Prisoners transferred from the American camps to the French camps kept on starving. Journalist Jacques Fauvet wrote in *Le Monde*: "As one speaks today of Dachau, in 10 years people throughout the world will speak about camps like Saint Paul D'Eyejeaux," where 17,000 prisoners taken over from the Americans in late July were dying so fast that within a few weeks two cemeteries of 200 graves each had been filled. The death rate by the end of September was 10 per day, or over 21% per year.

Fauvet challenged the notion of revenge: "People will object that the Germans weren't very particular on the matter of feeding our men, but even if they did violate the Geneva Convention, that hardly seems to justify our following their example...People have often said that the best service that we could do the Germans would be to imitate them, so they would one day find us before the judgment of history, but it is to an ideal higher than mere dignity that France should remain faithful; it is to be regretted that the foreign press had to remind us of that...We didn't suffer and fight to perpetuate the crimes of other times and places." [26]

Jean-Pierre Pradervand, head of the delegations of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in France, went to inspect the French camp at Thorée les Pins in the late summer of 1945. This camp was already known in the village nearby as "Buchenwald" after the notorious German camp. Two thousand

of the men at the camp were already so far gone that nothing could save them. Twenty of the prisoners died that day while Pradervand was there. Approximately 6,000 of the prisoners would soon be dead unless they were immediately given food, clothing, shelter and medical care. All of the remaining prisoners were undernourished.

Pradervand first appealed directly to de Gaulle, who repeatedly ignored him. So Pradervand got in touch with the ICRC in Geneva, asking for action. On September 14, 1945, the ICRC in Geneva sent a devastating document to the State Department in Washington, D.C. based on Pradervand's report of the conditions in the camp. The document requested that the U.S. government take emergency measures to supply the prisoners with food, medications, clothing, boots, blankets and soap. The ICRC recommended that the United States increase rations in American camps in Europe to obviate the prolonged undernourishment of the German prisoners.[\[27\]](#)

Henry W. Dunning, who was in the Prisoner-of-War Department of the American Red Cross, also wrote on September 5, 1945, to the American Red Cross headquarters in Washington, D.C. Dunning stated:

the situation of the German prisoners of war in France has become desperate and shortly will become an open scandal. During the past week several Frenchmen, who were formerly prisoners of the Germans, have called on me to protest the treatment being given German prisoners of war by the French Government. Gen. Thrasher Commanding the Oise Intermediary sector, asked one of our field workers to come to Paris to see me about the same matter. Mrs. Dunning, returning from Bourges, reports that dozens of German prisoners are dying there weekly. I saw Pradervand who told me that the situation of German prisoners in France in many instances is worse than in the former German concentration camps. He showed me photographs of human skeletons and letters from French camp commanders who have asked to be relieved because they can get no help from the French government and cannot stand to see the prisoners dying from lack of food. Pradervand has appealed to everyone in the French government but to no avail.[\[28\]](#)

The French newspaper *Le Figaro* reported the horrific conditions of the prisoner camps in September 1945. The newspaper had been convinced by the testimony of impeccable witnesses, such as a priest, Father Le Meur, who had actually seen the prisoners starving in the camps. *Le Figaro's* reporter, Serge Bromberger, wrote: "The most serious source confirmed that the physical state of the prisoners was worse than deplorable. People were talking a horrifying death rate, not from sickness but starvation, and of men who weighed an average 35-45 kilos [80-100 pounds]. At first, we doubted the truth of all this, but appeals came to us from many sources and we could not disregard the testimony of Father Le Meur, Assistant General Chaplain to the prisoners."

Le Figaro interviewed French Gen. Louis Buisson, the head of the Prisoner of War Service, who admitted that the prisoners got only 900 to 1,000 calories per day. Buisson said, "The doctors told us this was just enough for a man lying in bed never moving not to die too quickly."[\[29\]](#)

Le Figaro reported in an article entitled "We Should Not Resemble Them": "In certain camps for German prisoners of war.... living skeletons may be seen, almost like those in German concentration camps, and deaths from undernourishment are numerous. We learn that prisoners have been savagely and systematically beaten and that some have been employed in removing mines without protection equipment so that they have been condemned to die sooner or later."[\[30\]](#)

Louis Clair reported in *The Progressive* on the horrible conditions in the French camps of German POWs:

In a camp in the Sarthe district for 20,000 prisoners, inmates receive 900 calories a day; thus 12 die every day in the hospital. Four to five thousand are unable to work at all anymore. Recently trains with new prisoners arrived in the camp: several prisoners had died during the trip, several others had tried to stay alive by eating coal that had been lying in the freight train by which they came.

In an Orleans camp, the commander received 16 francs a day per head or prisoner to buy food, but he spent only nine francs, so that the prisoners were starving. In the Charentes district, 2,500 of the 12,000 camp inmates are sick. A young French soldier writes to a friend just returned from a Nazi camp: "I watch those who made you suffer so much, dying of hunger, sleeping on cold cement floors, in no way protected from rain and wind. I see kids of 19, who beg me to give them certificates that they are healthy enough to join the French Foreign Legion...Yes, I who hated them so much, today can only feel pity for them."

A witness reports on the camp in Langres: "I have seen them beaten with rifle butts and kicked with feet in the streets of the town because they broke down of overwork. Two or three of them die of exhaustion every week."

In another camp near Langres, 700 prisoners slowly die of hunger; they have hardly any blankets and not enough straw to sleep on; there is a typhoid epidemic in the camp which has already spread to the neighboring village. In another camp prisoners receive only one meal a day but are expected to continue working. Elsewhere so many have died recently that the cemetery space was exhausted and another cemetery had to be built.

In a camp where prisoners work on the removal of mines, regular food supplies arrive only every second day so that "prisoners make themselves a soup of grass and some stolen vegetables." All prisoners of this camp have contracted tuberculosis. Here and elsewhere treatment differs in no respect from the Nazi SS brutality. Many cases have been reported where men have been so horribly beaten that their limbs were broken. In one camp, men were awakened during the night, crawled out of their barracks and then shot "because of attempted escape."

There are written affidavits proving that in certain camps commanding officers sold on the black market all the supplies that had been provided by American Army authorities; there are other affidavits stating that the prisoners were forced to take off their shoes and run the gauntlet. And so on, and so on...These are the facts.[\[31\]](#)

The ICRC inspecting the French camps in 1945 and 1946 reported time after time that conditions were "unsatisfactory," "disturbing," "alarming," but very seldom that they were satisfactory. At the end of October 1946, the ICRC stated that "the situation at present is more than alarming. More than half the German POWs working are insufficiently clad and will not be able to stand up to the rigors of winter without running the gravest risks of disease. In such conditions a high number of deaths in the course of winter must be expected." The same dire warnings were repeated in a report by the ICRC in 1947.[\[32\]](#)

Random shootings of prisoners were common in the French camps. Lt. Col. Valentine Barnes reported that drunken French army officers at Andernach one night drove their jeep through the camp laughing and shouting as they blasted the prisoners with their Sten guns. The result was 47 dead prisoners and 55 wounded. French guards pretending to notice an escape attempt at another camp shot down 10

prisoners in their cages. The violence reached such heights in the 108th Infantry Regiment that Gen. Billotte, the commanding officer of the Region, recommended that the Regiment be dissolved. Billotte's recommendation was based on the advice of Lt. Col. de Champvallier, the Regiment's CO, who had given up attempting to discipline his men.[\[33\]](#)

French Capt. Julien thought as he walked in the former American camp of 32,000 prisoners at Dietersheim in July 1945, "This is just like Buchenwald and Dachau." The muddy ground was "peopled with living skeletons," some of whom died as he watched, others huddled under bits of cardboard. Women lying in holes in the ground stared at him with bulging bellies from hunger edema, old men with long grey hair watched him feebly, and starving children of six or seven looked at him with lifeless eyes. Julien could find no food at all in this camp. The two German doctors in the "hospital" were attempting to take care of the many dying patients stretched out on dirty blankets on the ground, between the marks of the tents the Americans had taken with them.

The 103,500 prisoners in five camps near Dietersheim were supposed to be part of the labor force given by the Americans to the French for reparations. However, of these prisoners the French counted 32,640 who could not work because they were old men, women, children less than eight years old, boys age eight to 14, terminally sick or cripples. All of these prisoners were immediately released. The prisoners found at another former U.S. camp at Hechtsheim were also in lamentable condition. The skeletal prisoners at Hechtsheim dressed in rags again reminded Capt. Julien of the victims in German concentration camps. In his report, Julien called the camps "bagnes de mort lents" or slow-death camps.

Capt. Julien took immediate steps to improve conditions in the camps. The official army ration had been only 800 calories per person per day. This starvation level, which was the same as the German concentration camp at Bergen-Belsen when it was liberated, was all that the French army allocated to POWs from its own supplies. Capt. Julien rounded up the women from the village, who immediately brought food to the camp. Julien received additional help in his efforts to improve conditions in the camps from "German authorities" and the ICRC. By August 1, 1945, over 90% of the prisoners were housed in tents, food rations were greatly increased, and the death rate had been cut by more than half. Capt. Julien's system of improving the camps worked. The U.S. Army could have adopted Julien's humanitarian methods, but chose instead to let the German POWs die of exposure and slow starvation.[\[34\]](#)

On a visit to one prison camp, Robert Murphy, who was the civilian political advisor to Eisenhower while he served for a few months as Military Governor, "was startled to see that our prisoners were almost as weak and emaciated as those I had observed in Nazi prison camps." The commandant of the camp told Murphy that he had deliberately kept the inmates on a starvation diet. The commandant explained, "These Nazis are getting a dose of their own medicine." Murphy was later able to get the commandant transferred to another post. It is uncertain how much conditions at the camp improved after the commandant's transfer.[\[35\]](#)

Conclusion

James Bacque said the response he received following the original publication of *Other Losses* was amazing. Bacque wrote: "Most gratifying has been the huge response from thousands of ex-prisoners who have written to me, or telephoned, sent faxes or e-mail, or even called at my door, to thank me for telling a story they feared would die with them. They continue to send me diaries, letters, Tagebücher,

self-published books, typescripts of memoirs, in three or four languages, along with photographs, maps, drawings, paintings and even a few artifacts.”^[36]

In 2009 Bacque deposited in the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library at the University of Toronto many documents, research materials, transcripts, tapes and letters sent to him by surviving German POWs and other witnesses.^[37] He also lists in the bibliography to the third edition of *Other Losses* dozens of books written by German POWs who survived the Allied POW camps.^[38] All of these accounts are extended and confirmed by numerous testimonies from American soldiers who witnessed the lethal conditions in the Allied POW camps.

Endnotes

^[1] Bacque, James, *Other Losses: An Investigation into the Mass Deaths of German Prisoners at the Hands of the French and Americans after World War II*, 3rd edition, Vancouver, British Columbia: Talonbooks, 2011, pp. lxvi-lxvii.

^[2] Wear, John, “American and French Witnesses to the American and French POW Camps after World War II,” *Inconvenient History*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 2020.

^[3] Laska, Werner Wilhelm, “In a U.S. Death Camp—1945,” *The Journal of Historical Review*, Vol. 10, No. 2, Summer 1990, pp. 169-170.

^[4] *Ibid.*, p. 175.

^[5] Bacque, James, *Other Losses: An Investigation into the Mass Deaths of German Prisoners at the Hands of the French and Americans after World War II*, 3rd edition, Vancouver, British Columbia: Talonbooks, 2011, p. xxii.

^[6] Bacque, James, *Crimes and Mercies: The Fate of German Civilians under Allied Occupation, 1944-1950*, 2nd edition, Vancouver, British Columbia: Talonbooks, 2007, pp. 49-50.

^[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51, 53.

^[8] Bacque, James, *Other Losses: An Investigation into the Mass Deaths of German Prisoners at the Hands of the French and Americans after World War II*, 3rd edition, Vancouver, British Columbia: Talonbooks, 2011, pp. xxxiv-xxxv.

^[9] *Ibid.*, p. lxiii.

^[10] *Ibid.*, p. 130.

^[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

^[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 37, 39.

^[13] *Ibid.*, p. 41.

^[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 34.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 36.

[17] *Ibid.*, pp. 128-130.

[18] Bacque, James, *Crimes and Mercies: The Fate of German Civilians under Allied Occupation, 1944-1950*, 2nd edition, Vancouver, British Columbia: Talonbooks, 2007, pp. 91, 231 (footnote 13).

[19] Bacque, James, *Other Losses: An Investigation into the Mass Deaths of German Prisoners at the Hands of the French and Americans after World War II*, 3rd edition, Vancouver, British Columbia: Talonbooks, 2011, p. xxxvii.

[20] *Ibid.*, pp. xxxiv, 239.

[21] *Ibid.*, pp. xxxii-xxxiv.

[22] Bacque, James, *Crimes and Mercies: The Fate of German Civilians under Allied Occupation, 1944-1950*, 2nd edition, Vancouver, British Columbia: Talonbooks, 2007, p. 46.

[23] Bacque, James, *Other Losses: An Investigation into the Mass Deaths of German Prisoners at the Hands of the French and Americans after World War II*, 3rd edition, Vancouver, British Columbia: Talonbooks, 2011, pp. 186-187.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 31.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. xxxix.

[26] *Ibid.*, pp. 97-98.

[27] *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 89.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 91.

[30] Keeling, Ralph Franklin, *Gruesome Harvest: The Allies' Postwar War against the German People*, Torrance, Cal.: Institute for Historical Review, 1992, p. 22.

[31] Clair, Louis, *The Progressive*, Jan. 14, 1946, p. 4. Quoted in Keeling, Ralph Franklin, *Gruesome Harvest: The Allies' Postwar War against the German People*, Torrance, Cal.: Institute for Historical Review, 1992, pp. 22-23.

[32] Bacque, James, *Other Losses: An Investigation into the Mass Deaths of German Prisoners at the Hands of the French and Americans after World War II*, 3rd edition, Vancouver, British Columbia: Talonbooks, 2011, p. 107.

[33] *Ibid.*, pp. 85-86.

[34] *Ibid.*, pp. 81-83.

[35] *Ibid.*, pp. 144-145.

^[36] Bacque, James, *Other Losses: An Investigation into the Mass Deaths of German Prisoners at the Hands of the French and Americans after World War II*, 3rd edition, Vancouver, British Columbia: Talonbooks, 2011, p. xxiii.

^[37] *Ibid.*, p. 308.

^[38] *Ibid.*, pp. 312-314.

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